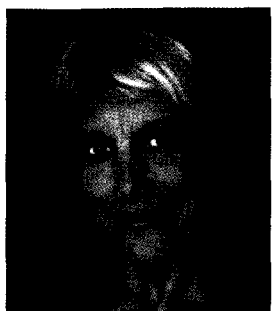


Under the leadership of Chair **Jani Lauzon**, the ACTRA National Diversity Committee has been reinvigorated. Longtime diversity activist **Rita Shelton Deverell** had a chat with Jani to get her take on where we're at and what still needs to be done to make sure our screens reflect the diversity of our real world.



**Jani Lauzon** is an ACTRA National and ACTRA Toronto Councillor and Chair of the ACTRA National Diversity Committee. She is a Gemini-Award-winning puppeteer and a JUNO-nominated singer/songwriter.

#### **Rita Deverell:**

What are some of the Diversity Committee's current and upcoming initiatives?

#### **Jani Lauzon:**

We've been using the digital platform to drive home our message. We've produced two successful videos and two more are in the creation phase. We are also creating print material and looking at ways of gathering similar stats to those in your groundbreaking report **Equal Opportunities to Perform**. Everyone loves stats!

We will also be continuing with our **Aboriginal Film-**

**makers' Forum** discussion group. The overall goal continues to be education and outreach.

#### **Rita:**

In these times of cutbacks to the CBC, Telefilm and NFB along with Saskatchewan tax-credit cuts, I fear people may say, "How can we worry about minorities when the majority is suffering so badly?"

#### **Jani:**

Oh, I've heard it all. "You're taking work away from me," and "Why should diverse actors get special treatment?" Argh. If we could go back in time and erase my father's

residential school experience or champion inclusivity from the beginning in those organizations you speak of, we wouldn't need 'special treatment' today. What ACTRA and other key organizations like NBC Universal, and Karen King's Productions Without Borders have been trying to build into the foundation of our Canadian industry is that inclusivity is good business. Casting inclusively widens the audience base and opens up revenue streams. Culturally and physically diverse people are the fastest growing populations in Canada and collectively we are no longer the minority. So yes, we must work together to build a Canadian industry. Then, and only then, do we all

succeed and thus ACTRA's catchphrase, "Diversity works, for all of us."

#### **Rita:**

As much as I admired the success of *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, I also could not help but note that it was the one show always named when the CBC and other media organizations wanted to prove how much diversity there is. My reaction is "One series does not a revolution make." Now that that one series is over, to what other titles can we proudly point?



ACTRA was recently invited as special guests to the Inclusion in the Arts & Media of People with Disabilities (IAMPWD) summit in Los Angeles. Pictured: *Breaking Bad*'s **R.J. Mitte**, SAG President **Ken Howard**, ACTRA's Director of Public Policy & Communications **Joanne Deer**, AFTRA President **Roberta Reardon**, *CS/s* **Robert David Hall** and ACTRA National Councillor **Spirit Synott** (front).